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A
R E V I E W
OF
JOHNSON'S CRITICISM
ON
MILTON'S ENGLISH PROSE.

CHARLES WOOD, Printer,
Poppin's Court, Fleet Street, London.

A
R E V I E W
OF
JOHNSON'S CRITICISM
ON
THE STYLE
OF
MILTON'S ENGLISH PROSE;
WITH
STRICTURES ON THE INTRODUCTION OF LATIN IDIOMS
INTO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

Thomas
BY T. HOLT WHITE, ESQ.

Οὔτις, ἔμευ ζῶντος καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ δεσκομένοιο,
Σοὶ κοίλης παρὰ νηυσὶ θαρείας χεῖρας ἐποίησι,
ΣΤΥΜΠΙΑΝΤΩΝ ΔΑΝΑΩΝ· ὅτ' ἂν ἈΓΑΜΕΜΝΟΝΑ Εἴπησ,
Ὅς νῦν πολλὸν ἄριστος ἐνὶ στρατῷ εὐχεται εἶναι.

PRINTED FOR R. HUNTER,
SUCCESSOR TO MR. JOHNSON,
N^o 72, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.
1818.

PR 3594

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P. 3. 1. 1. 8

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A

R E V I E W,

&c. &c.

WE may, I think, attribute in a considerable degree the neglect into which MILTON's Prose Works had fallen, to the vulgar obloquy inseparably attendant upon bold and open conduct on the unsuccessful side in civil dissensions. It required the intervention of a century, before *Dryden's* incontestable merit as a Poet could buoy him up effectually under the public odium brought on his name by abetting the House of Stuart, with his wit and genius, in their attempts to subvert the Liberties and Religion of his Country. Whatever be their dissimilarity in many circumstances, the consequence of adverse

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fortune was to both in some measure the same. It is but recently that *Dryden* has had his high rank, as a Writer of Prose, acknowledged; and no great number of years has passed away since the Earl of *Orrery*, in a publication, which had its season of reputation, told his Son, that he would find the “prosaical works of
 “MILTON more nervous than elegant;
 “more distinguished by the strength of
 “reason than by the rules of rhetoric:
 “his diction is harsh, his periods tedious;
 “and, when he becomes a prose writer,
 “the majesty that attends his poetry
 “vanishes, and is entirely lost: yet, with
 “all his faults, and exclusive of his character as a poet, he must ever remain
 “the only learned author of that tasteless
 “age in which he flourished: and it is
 “probable, that his great attention to the
 “Latin language might have rendered
 “him less correct than he otherwise
 “would have been in his native tongue.”

Justice to so great a writer as MILTON demands, that these summary and unde-

signated strictures should no longer stand without some notice ; rather because not a few, for want of examination, have taken up the same ill impressions, than from any intrinsic weight which we should be inclined to allow to the disapprobation of the Letter-writer on *Swift*. If it were said of the poet's blank verse, in the same vague and superficial way, that, through his endeavour to aggrandize it, in order to keep it from sinking into prose, he occasionally made it uncouth, and sometimes embarrassed his meaning by strains of language, by disarrangements in the structure of the verse, and by involutions of the sense, or by other devices of artificial contexture, entirely alien from the natural order and disposition of legitimate English—such remark, while it would not be altogether destitute of foundation, so far as it was referred to his great epic, must be received with very many limitations as to *Paradise Regained*; and would be especially misapplied to the sweetness and to the chastity of expression for which

the Masque of *Comus* is conspicuous. His Prose partakes as little as his Poetry of any uniform and settled character. As in other skilful writers, we find the style suited respectively to his subjects. If there be sometimes fair ground for the observation, that “his diction is harsh” in his first and polemical treatises, which grew out of knotty texts in Scripture, and were on abstruse and disputable points of ecclesiastical history and government, his written Speech in defence of an open Press furnishes a perpetual and resistless testimony, that he could be as smooth and flowing as he is animated and copious. It abounds in passages where the life and vigour of the sentiment are happily expressed in the unadulterated energies of his native tongue. Parts might be readily selected from it, to establish, that he often “drew from wells of English undefil’d.” By this I would not be understood to deny, that a sprinkling of “extern words” may be pointed out; nor would I insinuate, that his phraseology in this, or in any other of

his performances, is invariably exempt from solecisms of classical derivation: neither was to be expected in one who, like him, was habitually exercised in reading and writing Latin; who through the whole of life was a diligent collector of materials for a Latin Dictionary, and who had been so sedulously instituted in all the literature of Athens and of Rome. In several of his works, however, particularly in those of a later date, these blemishes are of no very frequent recurrence. Few, if any, of his time will in these respects be found less exceptionable. It would be easy to bring abundant proof of MILTON's powers as a writer of English Prose. Here, to put the futility of Lord *Orrery's* deteriorating opinion out of question, I transcribe his panegyric on the Long Parliament; since, in the *Areopagitica*, he himself refers to it with complacency, and because a favourite subject would call forth much of his care in the composition.

“ Now, although it be a digression from

“ the ensuing matter, yet, because it shall
 “ not be said I am apter to blame others
 “ than to make trial myself, and that I
 “ may, after this harsh discord, touch upon
 “ a smoother string, awhile to entertain
 “ myself and him that list with some more
 “ pleasing fit, and not the less to testify
 “ the gratitude which I owe to those pub-
 “ lic benefactors of their country, for the
 “ share I enjoy in the common peace and
 “ good by their incessant labours, I shall
 “ be so troublesome to this declaimer, for
 “ once, as to show him what he might
 “ have better said in their praise; wherein
 “ I must mention only some few things of
 “ many; for more than that to a digression
 “ may not be granted; although cer-
 “ tainly their actions are worthy not thus
 “ to be spoken of by the way; yet if here-
 “ after it befall me to attempt something
 “ more answerable to their great merits,
 “ I perceive how hopeless it will be to
 “ reach the height of their praises, at the
 “ accomplishment of that expectation that
 “ waits upon their noble deeds, the un-

“ finishing whereof already surpasses what
 “ others before them have left enacted,
 “ with their utmost performance, through
 “ many ages. And to the end we may
 “ be confident, that what they do pro-
 “ ceeds neither from uncertain opinion
 “ nor sudden counsels, but from mature
 “ wisdom, deliberate virtue, and dear af-
 “ fection to the public good, I shall begin
 “ at that, which made them likeliest, in
 “ the eyes of good men, to effect those
 “ things for the recovery of decayed reli-
 “ gion and the commonwealth, which they
 “ who were best minded had long wished
 “ for, but few, as the times then were
 “ desperate, had the courage to hope for.
 “ First, therefore, the most of them being
 “ either of ancient and high nobility, or
 “ at least of known and well reputed an-
 “ cestry, which is a great advantage to-
 “ wards virtue one way, but, in respect of
 “ wealth, ease, and flattery, which accom-
 “ panies a nice and tender education, is
 “ as much a hindrance another way, the
 “ good which lay before them they took,

“ in imitating the worthiest of their pro-
 “ genitors ; and the evil which assaulted
 “ their younger years, by the temptation
 “ of riches, high birth, and that usual
 “ bringing up, perhaps too favourable and
 “ too remiss, through the strength of an
 “ inbred goodness, and with the help of
 “ divine grace, that had marked them out
 “ for no mean purposes, they nobly over-
 “ came. Yet had they a greater danger
 “ to cope with ; for, being trained up in
 “ the knowledge of learning, and sent to
 “ those places which were intended to be
 “ the seed-plots of piety and the liberal
 “ arts, but were become the nurseries of
 “ superstition and empty speculation, as
 “ they were prosperous against those vices
 “ which grow upon youth out of idleness
 “ and superfluity, so were they happy in
 “ working off the harms of their abused
 “ studies and labours ; correcting, by the
 “ clearness of their own judgment, the
 “ errors of their misinstruction ; and were,
 “ as David was, wiser than their teachers.
 “ And although their lot fell into such

“ times, and to be bred in such places,
 “ where, if they chanced to be taught any
 “ thing good, or of their own accord had
 “ learnt it, they might see that presently
 “ untaught them by the custom and ill
 “ example of their elders; so far, in all
 “ probability, was their youth from being
 “ misled by the single power of example,
 “ as their riper years were known to be
 “ unmoved with the baits of preferment,
 “ and undaunted for any discouragement
 “ and terror, which appeared often to
 “ those that loved religion and their
 “ native liberty; which two things God
 “ hath inseparably knit together, and hath
 “ disclosed to us, that they who seek to
 “ corrupt our religion are the same that
 “ would enthrall our civil liberty. Thus,
 “ in the midst of all disadvantages and
 “ disrespects (some also at last not with-
 “ out imprisonment and open disgraces in
 “ the cause of their country) having given
 “ proof of themselves to be better made
 “ and framed by nature to the love and
 “ practice of virtue than others under the

“ holiest precepts and best examples have
 “ been headstrong and prone to vice, and
 “ having, in all the trials of a firm in-
 “ grafted honesty, not oftener buckled in
 “ the conflict than given every opposition
 “ the foil, this moreover was added by
 “ favour from Heaven, as an ornament
 “ and happiness to their virtue, that it
 “ should be neither obscure in the opinion
 “ of men, nor eclipsed for want of matter
 “ equal to illustrate itself; God and man
 “ consenting, in joint approbation, to
 “ choose them out as worthiest above
 “ others to be both the great reform-
 “ ers of the church and the restorers
 “ of the commonwealth. Nor did they
 “ deceive that expectation, which, with the
 “ eyes and desires of their country, was
 “ fixt upon them; for no sooner did the
 “ force of so much united excellence meet
 “ in one globe of brightness and efficacy,
 “ but, encountering the dazzled resistance
 “ of tyranny, they gave not over, though
 “ their enemies were strong and subtle,
 “ till they had laid her grovelling upon

“ the fatal block ; with one stroke win-
 “ ning again our lost liberties and char-
 “ ters, which our forefathers, after so
 “ many battles, could scarce maintain.
 “ And meeting next, as I may so resem-
 “ ble, with the second life of tyranny (for
 “ she was grown an ambiguous monster,
 “ and to be slain in two shapes), guarded
 “ with superstition, which hath no small
 “ power to captivate the minds of men,
 “ otherwise most wise, they neither
 “ were taken with her mitred hypocrisy,
 “ nor terrified with the push of her
 “ bestial horns ; but, breaking them im-
 “ mediately, forced her to unbend the
 “ pontifical brow and recoil ; which re-
 “ pulse only, given to the prelates (that
 “ we may imagine how happy their re-
 “ moval would be), was the produce-
 “ ment of such glorious effects and
 “ consequences in the church, that, if
 “ I should compare them with those ex-
 “ ploits of highest fame in poems and
 “ panegyrics of old, I am certain it would
 “ but diminish and impair their worth,

“ who are now my argument. For those
 “ ancient worthies delivered men from
 “ such tyrants as were content to enforce
 “ only an outward obedience, letting the
 “ mind be as free as it could ; but these
 “ have freed us from a doctrine of ty-
 “ ranny, that offered violence and corrup-
 “ tion even to the inward persuasion.
 “ They set at liberty nations and cities of
 “ men, good and bad mixed together ; but
 “ these, opening the prisons and dungeons,
 “ called out of darkness and bonds the
 “ elect martyrs and witnesses of their
 “ Redeemer. They restored the body to
 “ ease and wealth ; but these the op-
 “ pressed conscience to that freedom,
 “ which is the chief prerogative of the
 “ Gospell ; taking off those cruel burdens
 “ imposed not by necessity, as other tyrants
 “ are wont for the safeguard of their
 “ lives, but laid upon our necks* by the

* “ Laid upon our necks ;” *i. e.* as a *yoke* : after the
 Latin, “ *Itaque posuistis in cervicibus nostris sempi-*
 “ *ternum dominum, quem dies et noctes timeremus.*”

“ strange wilfulness and wantonness of a
 “ needless* and jolly persecutor called
 “ Indifference. Lastly, some of those
 “ ancient deliverers have had immortal
 “ praises for preserving their citizens
 “ from a famine of corn; but these, by
 “ this only repulse of an unholy hierarchy,
 “ almost in a moment replenished with
 “ saving knowledge their country, nigh fa-
 “ mished for want of that which should
 “ feed their souls. All this being done
 “ while two armies in the field stood gaz-
 “ ing on; the one in reverence of such
 “ nobleness quietly gave back and dis-
 “ lodged; the other, spite of the unruli-
 “ ness and doubted fidelity in some regi-
 “ ments, was either persuaded or com-
 “ pelled to disband and retire home: with
 “ such a majesty had their wisdom begirt
 “ itself, that whereas others had levied
 “ war to subdue a nation that sought for
 “ peace, they, sitting here in peace, could
 “ so many miles extend the force of their

* Is “needless” an error of the Press for heedless?

“ single words as to overawe the dissolute
 “ stoutness of an armed power, secretly
 “ stirred up, and almost hired against
 “ them; and having by a solemn Pro-
 “ testation vowed themselves and the
 “ kingdom anew to God and his service,
 “ and by a prudent foresight, above what
 “ their fathers thought on, prevented the
 “ dissolution and frustrating of their de-
 “ signs by an untimely breaking up, not-
 “ withstanding all the treasonous plots
 “ against them, all the rumours either of
 “ rebellion or invasion, they have not been
 “ yet brought to change their constant
 “ resolution, ever to think fearlessly of
 “ their own safeties and hopefully of the
 “ commonwealth; which hath gained
 “ them such an admiration from all good
 “ men, that now they hear it as their or-
 “ dinary surname to be saluted the fathers
 “ of their country, and sit as gods among
 “ daily petitions and public thanks flowing
 “ in upon them. Which doth so little yet
 “ exalt them in their own thoughts, that
 “ with all gentle affability and courteous

“ acceptance they both receive and return
 “ that tribute of thanks which is rendered
 “ them, testifying their zeal and desire to
 “ spend themselves as it were piecemeal
 “ upon the grievances and wrongs of their
 “ distressed nation ; insomuch that the
 “ meanest artizans and labourers, at other
 “ times also women, and often the younger
 “ sort of servants, assembling with their
 “ complaints, and that sometimes in a less
 “ humble guise than for petitioners, have
 “ gone with confidence, that neither their
 “ meanness would be rejected, nor their
 “ simplicity contemned, nor yet their
 “ urgency distasted either by the dignity,
 “ wisdom, or moderation of that supreme
 “ senate : nor did they depart unsatisfied.
 “ And, indeed, if we consider the general
 “ concourse of suppliants, the free and
 “ ready admittance, the willing and
 “ speedy redress in what is possible, it
 “ will not seem much otherwise than as
 “ if some divine commission from Heaven
 “ were descended to take into hearing
 “ and commiseration the long remediless

“ afflictions of this kingdom ; were it not
 “ that none more than themselves labour
 “ to remove and divert such thoughts,
 “ lest men should place too much confi-
 “ dence in their persons, still referring us
 “ and our prayers to him that can grant
 “ all, and appointing the monthly return
 “ of public fasts and supplications. There-
 “ fore, the more they seek to humble them-
 “ selves, the more does GOD by manifest
 “ signs and testimonies visibly honour
 “ their proceedings, and sets them as the
 “ mediators of this his covenant, which he
 “ offers us to renew. Wicked men daily
 “ conspire their hurt, and it comes to
 “ nothing. Rebellion rages in our Irish
 “ Province, but, with miraculous and loss-
 “ less victories of few against many, is
 “ daily discomfited and broken ; if we
 “ neglect not this early pledge of GOD’s
 “ inclining towards us by the slackness of
 “ our needful aids. And whereas at other
 “ times we count it ample honour when
 “ GOD vouchsafes to make man the in-
 “ strument and subordinate worker of his

“ gracious will, such acceptation have
 “ their prayers found with him, that to
 “ them he hath been pleased to make
 “ himself the agent and immediate per-
 “ former of their desires ; dissolving their
 “ difficulties when they are thought in-
 “ explicable, cutting out ways for them
 “ where no passage could be seen ; as who
 “ is there so regardless of Divine Provi-
 “ dence, that from late occurrences will
 “ not confess ? If, therefore, it be so high
 “ a grace when men are preferred to be
 “ but the inferior officers of good things
 “ from God, what is it when God him-
 “ self condescends and works with his
 “ own hands to fulfil the requests of men ?
 “ which I leave with them as the greatest
 “ praise that can belong to human nature.
 “ Not that we should think they are at the
 “ end of their glorious progress, but that
 “ they will go on to follow his Almighty
 “ leading, who seems to have thus cove-
 “ nanted with them, that, if the will and
 “ the endeavour shall be theirs, the per-
 “ formance and the perfecting shall be

“ his. Whence only it is that I have not
 “ feared, though many wise men have
 “ miscarried in praising great designs be-
 “ fore the utmost event; because I see
 “ who is their assistant, who is their con-
 “ federate, who hath engaged his omni-
 “ potent arm to support and crown with
 “ success their faith, their fortitude, their
 “ just and magnanimous actions, till he
 “ hath brought to pass all that expected
 “ good, which his servants trust is in his
 “ thoughts to bring upon this land, in
 “ the full and perfect reformation of his
 “ church*.

While sufficiently eloquent and luxu-
 riant through his Oration for the Liberty of
 unlicensed Printing, in the *History of*
Britain, he carefully avoids all redun-
 dancy. There he is terse: perhaps not
 unfrequently too concise for elegance.
 The general cast of his periods is com-
 pact, and unquestionably the opposite of
 “ tedious,” or expanded. It was *Old-*

* From an Apology for Smectymnus.

mixon's remark, when contrasting his style in that History with the amplification of *Clarendon*, that our Authour had not allowed words enough for his matter. *Oldmixon* omitted to subjoin, on the other part, that this brevity of expression does not injure the perspicuity of the narration.

To give every reader the opportunity of judging for himself, I will exhibit his portrait of *Alfred*, traced with the pencil of a master, and delineated *con amore*; which, by the way, argues strongly, that he was no enemy to kingly rule, when administered so as to conduce to the People's welfare. “ He was of person comelier
 “ than all his brethren, of pleasing tongue
 “ and graceful behaviour, ready wit and
 “ memory; yet, through the fondness of
 “ his parents towards him, had not been
 “ taught to read till the twelfth year of
 “ his age; but the great desire of learning, which was in him, soon appeared,
 “ by his conning of Saxon poems day and
 “ night, which, with great attention, he
 “ heard by others repeated. He was, be-

“ side, excellent at hunting, and the new
 “ art then of hawking; but more exem-
 “ plary in devotion, having collected into a
 “ book certain prayers and psalms, which
 “ he carried ever with him in his bosom,
 “ to use on all occasions. He thirsted
 “ after all liberal knowledge, and oft
 “ complained, that in his youth he had
 “ no teachers, in his middle age so little
 “ vacancy from wars and the cares of his
 “ kingdom; yet leisure he found, some-
 “ times, not only to learn much himself,
 “ but to communicate thereof what he
 “ could to his people, by translating books
 “ out of Latin into English, Orosius,
 “ Boethius, Beda’s History, and others:
 “ permitted none unlearned to bear office,
 “ either in court or commonwealth. At
 “ twenty years of age, not yet reigning,
 “ he took to wife Egelswitha, the daugh-
 “ ter of Ethelred, a Mercian earl. The
 “ extremities, which befel him in the sixth
 “ of his reign, Neothan, abbot, told him
 “ were justly come upon him for neglecting,
 “ in his younger days, the complaints of

“ such as, injured and oppressed, repaired
 “ to him, as then second person in the
 “ kingdom, for redress ; which neglect,
 “ were it such indeed, were yet excusable
 “ in a youth, through jollity of mind, un-
 “ willing perhaps to be detained long with
 “ sad and sorrowful narrations : but from
 “ the time of his undertaking regal charge
 “ no man more patient in hearing causes,
 “ more inquisitive in examining, more ex-
 “ act in doing justice and providing good
 “ laws, which are yet extant ; more severe
 “ in punishing unjust judges or obstinate
 “ offenders, thieves especially and robbers,
 “ to the terror of whom in cross ways were
 “ hung, upon a high post, certain chains
 “ of gold, as it were daring any one to
 “ take them thence ; so that justice seemed
 “ in his days not to flourish only but to
 “ triumph. No man than he more frugal
 “ of two precious things in man’s life, his
 “ time and his revenue ; no man wiser in
 “ the disposal of both. His time, the day
 “ and night, he distributed, by the burn-
 “ ing of certain tapers, into three equal

“ portions ; the one was for devotion, the
 “ other for public or private affairs, the
 “ third for bodily refreshment : how each
 “ hour past he was put in mind by one
 “ who had that office. His whole annual
 “ revenue, which his first care was should
 “ be justly his own, he divided into two
 “ equal parts : the first he employed to
 “ secular uses, and subdivided those into
 “ three ; the first to pay his soldiers,
 “ household servants, and guard, of which,
 “ divided into three bands, one attended
 “ monthly by turn : the second was to pay
 “ his architects and workmen, whom he
 “ had got together of several nations ; for
 “ he was also an elegant builder, above
 “ the custom and conceit of Englishmen
 “ in those days : the third he had in rea-
 “ diness to relieve or honour strangers,
 “ according to their worth, who came
 “ from all parts to see him and to live
 “ under him. The other equal part of his
 “ yearly wealth he dedicated to religious
 “ uses, those of four sorts : the first to
 “ relieve the poor ; the second to the

“ building and maintenance of two mo-
 “ nasteries ; the third of a school, where
 “ he had persuaded the sons of many
 “ noblemen to study sacred knowledge and
 “ liberal arts, some say at Oxford ; the
 “ fourth was for the relief of foreign
 “ churches, as far as India to the shrine
 “ of St. Thomas, sending thither Sigelm,
 “ Bishop of Sherburn, who both returned
 “ safe, and brought with him many rich
 “ gems and spices ; gifts also and a letter
 “ he received from the patriarch of Jeru-
 “ salem ; sent many to Rome, and for
 “ them received reliques. Thus far, and
 “ much more, might be said of his noble
 “ mind, which rendered him the mirror of
 “ princes. His body was diseased in his
 “ youth with a great soreness in the seige ;
 “ and that ceasing of itself, with another
 “ inward pain, of unknown cause, which
 “ held him by frequent fits to his dying
 “ day, yet not disenabled to sustain those
 “ many glorious labours of his life, both
 “ in peace and war*.”

* *The History of Britain*, b. v.

Lord Orrery's critical dictation, that the Poet's "majesty vanishes and is entirely lost when he became a Prose Writer," might well be controverted : but the short and plain answer to the noble Objector is, that he has placed on a parity cases that have no sameness of principle. There cannot be a fair comparison between works, which are quite distinct in their end and aim. With equal propriety might he have urged against *Shakspeare*, that the sublimity of *Macbeth* is entirely lost in the Comedy of *Twelfth Night*. This remark is beside so loosely stated, that we are unable to fix the sense. By "majesty," did he mean *grandeur of conception*? or did he mean *stateliness of expression*? But we ought not to require either, in disputations concerning ecclesiastical discipline, and the wearing or the not wearing of hoods and copes, and linen vestments, or other sacerdotal ornaments; and as little in *Colasterion*, or in a pamphlet of *Considerations touching the likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church*. No:

these and most of our Authour's controversial pieces were hastened to the Press, and treated on dark and intricate questions — questions, which refused ambitious ornament, and in which a regular pomp of phrase would have been ridiculously misplaced. It was enough when they instructed his readers; he had no anxiety beyond. If he pressed his arguments home to their understandings, he defeated his antagonists, and accomplished all that he had in his intention. Still, at times, he breaks out in a touching strain of eloquence, such as we might look to find in the prose writings of the Authour of *Paradise Lost*.

Lord *Orrery*, indeed, allows his Prose, with no restriction, to be “nervous, and to “be distinguished by strength of reason.” Surely this is the best, as it is the most decisive test of its merit; and all that we ought to promise ourselves, on topics barren as these were. This Nobleman's warm and merited recommendation of *Sydney's Discourses concerning Government*, both

for propriety of diction and for their historical matter, sets him above the suspicion, that political bigotry dictated this *ambages verborum*, these “ragged notions” and babblements.” He repeated, we may conclude, the undistinguishing censures he had heard current, without examination of their validity, and with as little reflection as when he asserts, that MILTON was the *only* learned person of an age, eminent for *Usher*, *Selden*, and *Cudworth*, to name no more.

The excuse of exemption from prejudice cannot, I state it with sorrow and reluctance, be pleaded in behalf of Dr. *Johnson*. Party spleen “put rancours in the vessel” of his peace:” as often as the renown of a Nonconformist and Commonwealth’s-man crossed his mind, it excited fervours of animosity not easily allayed.

While writing his “new narrative” of MILTON, he betrays an implacable bitterness against him, notwithstanding he was under the strong restraint of public opinion, as the late Mr. *George Steevens*

assured me : and the anecdote bears the appearance of much probability ; for when speaking his mind concealed under a mask he is explicit, that “ *Shakspeare’s* faults “ were those of a great poet ; those of “ *MILTON of a little pedant*. When *Shakspeare* is execrable he is so exquisitely “ so, that he is inimitable in his blemishes “ as in his beauties. The puns of Milton “ betray *a narrowness of education* and a “ degeneracy of habit.” Such was the direct hostility of his anonymous defamation, and it carries its own condemnation along with it. Again : “ If we consider “ him as a prose writer, he has *neither the “ learning of a scholar nor the manners of “ a gentleman* : there is no force in his “ reasoning, no elegance in his style, and “ no taste in his composition*!’”

With sympathies far different, Sir *William Jones* paid due homage to *MILTON’s* matchless endowments and exemplary mo-

* Quoted by Archdeacon *Blackburne*, in his caustic taunts and acute *Remarks on the Life of MILTON*, from a communication to the *Literary Magazine* by *Johnson*.

rals. In a panegyrical Oration, after the manner of *Isocrates*, which he composed for recitation before the assembled University of Oxford, he exclaims — “What a glorious character was MILTON! How sublime a Poet! How copious an Orator! How profound a Scholar! The miserable times in which he lived deprived this great man of the glory, which he must have acquired, if his genius had found room to expand itself in a free air and a favourable climate; for, had he flourished in *Athens*, while *Athens* herself was independent, he would have rivalled *Sophocles* in poetry, *Demosthenes* in eloquence, and even *Socrates* in virtue*.” Not that we ought to arraign *Johnson*, because the affections of

* Sir *William Jones* published this Oration in 1782, appended to the second edition of his constitutional Tract, “An Inquiry into the legal Mode of suppressing Riots;” together with an excellent Speech he made, in 1780, on the nomination of Candidates to represent the County of Middlesex. They were neither of them incorporated into his works. Why were they omitted?

his mind could not vibrate in unison with this high-toned eulogy on the strenuous vindicator of the Parliament; yet we may with justice reprobate the inveteracy with which he pursued him. An antipathy so marked, so virulent and unrelenting, and taking its rise from the causes I have assigned, cannot but diminish our veneration for this great teacher of Morality. Alas! it lies heavy on his memory, that his inexorable enmity (it can be called nothing less) should leave it difficult to conjecture into what vehemence of angry reproach it might have hurried him had it not been bridled by his awe of the public. But though he had kept no measure, and had let this malevolent impulse run its course, who at this day would assent to the assertion, that he could have proved a censor of power sufficient to displace MILTON from his elevated rank among the learned, the wise, and the good?

“ Mark! how the dread Pantheon stands

“ Amid the domes of modern hands;

“ Amid the toys of idle state,

“ How simply, how severely great !

“ Then turn, and while each western clime

“ Presents her tuneful sons to Time,

“ So mark thou MILTON's name.”

In the mean time, without allowing his acrimony full scope, it never slept ; nor did he suffer any occasion to pass by unheeded, when he thought he saw the opportunity, either openly or by stealth, to traduce MILTON's great qualities or to depress his name*. A premeditated, half-veiled design to vilify him is diffused throughout this biographical memoir ; the

* In a conversation I once held with Professor *Porson*, on Dr. *Johnson's* participation in the accusation which *Lauder* preferred against MILTON for plagiarisms from Latin Poets of the modern ages, he mentioned, that the subject had occupied his thoughts with a view to publication ; and added, that he only delayed it till he could procure a Pamphlet which that controversy produced. Two of the arguments he stated were to my judgment conclusive on the question. 1. That, with a mind always eager for inquiry on every subject connected with literature, as well as greedy of every pretence to depreciate

same in every event, whether it be in the scenes of domestic society and literary retirement, or in the career of his public occupations. To speak out, the Biographer has dissected him with an invenomed scalpel. This infirmity of mind is exemplified in an instance that calls for a direct answer, where *Johnson* decides magisterially, that our Authour, *both in prose and verse, formed his style on a perverse and pedantic principle : that he was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom.* By

MILTON, it is not credible that *Johnson*, as soon as apprized by *Lauder* of his alleged discovery, would not have expressed a desire to examine the works himself in which the original passages were asserted to exist. 2. That *Johnson*, throughout his biography of MILTON, has preserved a deep silence on the story of *Lauder* and his falsified quotations. Mr. *Porson* closed his remarks by saying, in his own emphatic way—"Guilty—Death."

At the time, I understood him to be prepared for the Press, waiting only to read the Tract he mentioned; but as I have been informed, that no such manuscript was at his death to be found among his papers, I now suppose, that he had been contented to retain the whole in his memory.

a *foreign* idiom the biographer means a *Latin* idiom; his phrase when elsewhere inflicting the same animadversion on MILTON. I am not quite satisfied, that I comprehend correctly what *Johnson* here intended by *idiom*. Did he accuse him of “Romanizing our tongue” too much, as *Dryden* accused *Ben Jonson*; “leaving
 “the words which he translated almost as
 “much Latin as he found them, wherein,
 “though he learnedly followed their lan-
 “guage, he did not enough comply with
 “the *idiom* of ours?” Or was it, that, in the formation of his sentences, MILTON still fixed his eye on a Roman model? I am inclined to think, that he employed it in a sense different from that in this quotation from *Dryden*. He would, I believe, represent our Authour as giving systematically a Latin signification to words radically English; or to words of foreign extraction, which time had legitimated so as to have acquired an acknowledged and approved acceptation, become familiar by

general usage. Of this tendency I will subjoin some instances*. At the same

* For example: *hears ill*, and of a *sensible nostril*, phrases which occur in his *Areopagitica*, are of classic origin. To *hear ill*, *Κακῶς ἀκοῦειν*; (Vide *Steph. Thes. Græc. in v. Ἀκούω.*) *to be spoken ill of, to be of bad fame*. So *Tacitus*; “*Palam laudares: secreta male audiebant.*” *Hist. i. 10.*

Ben Jonson raised a witticism on the equivoque which the introduction of this idiom afforded to our language:—

“Sub. I do not *hear well*.

“Fac. Not of *this*, I think it.

The Alchymist; Act i, Scene 1.

Laud too used it; “I conceive,” said he, “’tis no genteel part for a man of place and power in his country to oppress poor clergymen which neighbour about him. In which kind this gentleman *pessime audiebat*, “*heard extremely ill.*”

State Trials; *Hargrave’s Edit. vol. i, col. 874.*

Of a *sensible nostril*,

—— “*Minus aptus acutis*

“*Naribus.*”

Horat. Sat. I, iii. 29.

MILTON was not however the first who imported this awkward phraseology. His antagonist, Bishop *Hall*, has,

“While now my rhymes relish of the ferule still,

“Some *nose-wise* pedant saith.”

Satires; p. 58, edit. 1753.

And in the same Oration MILTON asks—“who shall

time this predilection for Latin-English is susceptible of an explanation, which will prove the *perverseness and pedantry* here laid to his charge to be a flagrant exaggeration. It may be, that his eagerness of detraction in every circumstance which bore relation to MILTON instigated the sagacious Critic to this particular reprehension against his better knowlege: otherwise, the view he took of this question was narrow and darkly clouded by prejudice and passion. He confounded antient practices with the opinions of the

“be the *rectors* of our daily rioting?” Where *rectors* is in the same Latin acceptation as in his verses in *Quintum Novembris*:

“Cum niger umbrarum dominus, *rector* que silentium.”

But this sense in English was far from novel or peculiar to him. We find it in *Danyel's Sonnets*, 4to. 1592. *Signat.* b. 2.

“No bayes I seeke to deck my mourning brow,

“O cleer eyde *rector* of the holie hill.”

as well as in others of our earlier writers.

These examples, and many more than these might be brought, will assist to screen MILTON from this imputed singularity of intruding a Latin-English diction.

eighteenth century. To rectify his mistake or his misrepresentation, it will be necessary to throw a retrospective glance over the period in which MILTON's birth was cast ; and as well to bear in mind how much of the fashion of style and the ornaments of all languages are the work of chance or conventional.

That a language, as it becomes more cultivated, should retrograde in any particular of correctness, or should drop any refinement it possessed in ruder ages, would not be readily anticipated. Yet so fortuitous, so changeful are the operations of time and custom on human speech, so much is it in all particulars the creature of casualty, that this happened even to the Latin tongue. *Cicero* has recorded, “ Quinetiam, quod jam subrusticum videtur, olim autem politius, eorum verborum, quorum eodem erant postremæ duæ literæ, quæ sunt in *optumus*, postremam literam detrahebant, nisi vocalis insequabatur. Ita non erat offensio in versibus, quam nunc fugiunt poëtæ novi.

“ Ita enim loquebamur,

“ *Qui est omnibu’ princeps: non, omnibus princeps.* Et

“ *Vita illa dignu’ locoque: non, dignus.*”

Orator. s. 161.

In like manner, the rustic dialect in the northern division of our island occasionally sinks the final consonant :

“ Wi’ mair o’ horrible and awfu’,

“ Which ev’n to name wad be unlawfu’.”

Burns’s Tam o’ Shanter.

Extravagant, metaphorical “ Orientalities,” driven, as we think, past the boundaries of bombast and hyperbole into utter absurdity, captivate the glowing fancies of the Asiatics. “ What (asks “ *Warburton*) is purity, but the use of “ such terms, with their multiplied combinations, as the interest, the complexity, or the caprice of a writer or “ speaker of authority hath preferred to its “ equals? *What is elegance, but such a “ turn of idiom as a fashionable fancy hath “ brought into repute?* And what is sublimity, but the application of such

“images as arbitrary or casual connexions, rather than their own native grandeur, have dignified and ennobled?”

As there are modes of composition peculiar to different countries, so are there modes peculiar to different æras in the same country; and contemporaries often imbibe such peculiarities without thought, in the way we all receive but too many of our opinions, almost mechanically, like the air we breathe. Every author's style and manner, therefore, necessarily catches a part of its colour from the influence of situation. This happened to MILTON like others; perhaps insensibly to himself, unless to bespeak approbation he purposely conformed to the ideas of good writing then predominant, and to which few have run counter with impunity. But for these causes, would the dignity of his epic poem have been debased by the miserable conceits which have found a place there? These corrupt “fetches of wit,” where so much labour was thrown away in combining similarities of sound, or

associations of remote or unallied imagery, were the delight of the age; and that they were the vice of the time, *Addison* held to be an extenuation sufficient for such manifest transgressions of the decorum, which in heroic, and in sacred poetry more especially, ought to be preserved inviolate. "Considering," says the *Spectator*, speaking of *Paradise Lost*, "that
 " all the poets of the age in which he
 " writ were infected with this wrong way
 " of thinking, he is rather to be admired
 " that he did not give more into it, than
 " that he did sometimes comply with the
 " vicious taste which still prevails so
 " much." Not so *Johnson*: he viewed this practice with the eyes of the present age, and so measured one time by the standard of another. Making neither allowance for the effects of education, nor for the infection of example, nor for the ceaseless fluctuations in affairs of taste, he sternly decrees, as if *MILTON* ought to be bound by the canons of criticism we have agreed

to acknowledge, but to which it is strange that he could hold a writer amenable, who had been in the grave for more than a century. We must believe, that this Dictator in the Republic of Letters either had himself forgotten, or that he hoped we should forget, the latitude left with the early writers of English. This latitude in some degree extended to a lower period than that I am now considering. Numberless violations of the precepts in the critical art, which the fastidious precision of to-day has been taught not to endure, were heretofore deemed pardonable license. The privilege of constraining, at pleasure, the orthography to their rhymes, which *Spenser* and *Fairfax* assumed, and to which sometimes *MILTON*, and in a few instances *Dryden*, disdained not to resort, with *Sternhold*, *Quarles*, and other poetasters, did not and does not lessen their poetical reputation. The same resource would have reduced in our eyes *Gray*, or *Cowper*, or Lord *Byron* to a level with the sorriest versifier. Thus

to judge by modern opinions is an error near akin to that of the French hypercritics, who take exception to descriptions and expressions in *Homer*, which are repugnant to a higher order of civilization than that which the Father of Poetry is painting, and not according with the notions of delicacy and politeness to which they are accustomed. Anomalies, like those for which our Authour is so harshly stigmatised, ought then to be regarded as belonging to his time to the full as much as the fables from heathen mythology with which he interlaced his Christian epic, or as the falling band in some of the portraits of him that have reached us. These reflections will account for, while they exculpate his Anglo-Latian barbarisms, if I may use that phrase: but this misapprehension (a very mild word) rises to importance in *Johnson*, who described himself, and rightly described himself, as
 “ having had more motives to consider
 “ the whole extent of our language than
 “ any other man, from its first forma-

tion* ;” and will therefore justify an investigation somewhat deeper than I have hitherto gone, in order to lay open the reason that prompted our earlier Authours to depart from the prescriptive and ordinary forms of idiomatical English.

When the vast migrations from the North overwhelmed Italy, and destroyed the Roman empire, the injury most to be lamented by distant generations was, I think, the extinction of the Roman language. I know not any ground for disbelieving, that adequate encouragement to the architect, to the statuary, and to the painter, would fail to produce abundant evidence, that we had little to lament from the Gothic rage, which (some say) fell on temples, statues, and pictures. The destruction of the Latin, as a living speech, is to be regarded in a light far different : that is a loss, which no human interference can retrieve. Its broken remains, as they subsist in Spain, in Italy,

* In his circulated Proposals for editing Shakspeare.

and France, serve only to set off its superiority over the present dialects of Europe. Our own, it is true, with the other Teutonic dialects, branches from a different stock; but the whole are in the comparison as a tumultuary croud to a well-trained force, when once put into confusion all is lost. While we may invert the arrangement, or throw a sentence from a Roman Authour into the disorder of a routed troop, still every word will readily fall again into its allotted station. This syntactical discipline is combined, moreover, with a melody of numbers, which no less raises our admiration, that it should ever have arrived at such perfection among a people, with whom wars for conquest were so exclusively the public care, that their epic Bard, when chaunting the glories of *the immortal City*, proudly disclaims all national pre-eminence, other than to dictate the conditions of peace, and to excel in the arts of ruling over subjugated countries. He did discreetly: in poetry the Romans were,

for the better part, the echoes of their Grecian masters : only one of their Orators has come down to us, and *he suck'd at Athens* : and as to the fine arts, with the exception of architecture, they appear to have nearly abandoned them ; it might be in despair.

Yet, after the long term of almost two thousand years, we are still gratified by the tuneable flow of Roman metre ; and we can ascertain by the ear, and without difficulty, the direct gradations of refinement in Latin poetry. The rough lines of *Ennius* fix at once his early date ; and the sonorous yet artless modulation of *Lucretius* is plainly distinguishable from *Virgil's* more dextrous construction and more mellifluent cadence. How unlike this to the verse of the various nations who now people Europe, which, it is most probable, is verse only to those with whom these metrical sounds are native. The recital of a French poem, it is observable, gives no pleasure to an English ear ; and, unless the poetical accent of the northern and

congenerous tongues correspond, it is not unlikely, that the uninformed classes of the community would confess, that their untutored ears were incapable of catching any succession of harmonious sounds from the poetry of their neighbours: insomuch, that if any of these languages should cease to be spoken, their rhythm, and the musical concord of their verse, might, in after-ages, be as irrecoverable as it is in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Commentators on which are not agreed, whether the whole were delivered to the Israelites in determinate numbers; or whether certain of their sacred books have metrical arrangement, a sort of *prose cadencée*; or whether parts of them have not some settled scheme of versification, while the remainder of the same compositions was written in plain prose.

An apt conclusion is to be drawn from this digressive illustration of the large claims, which the Latin has on our admiration, both for the graces of its numbers and for its significant perspicuity; the re-

sult of the unrivalled regularity of its inflections, and consequent subjection to grammatical rules. This conclusion is, that, in the earnest attention which the antients obtained, when they were first drawn from their recesses, nothing could be more natural than that learned men should be eager to assimilate their unformed, irregular, and imperfect language to that of *Livy* and *Cicero*, of *Terence* and *Virgil*. Every eye was then curiously intent on these monumental exemplars of true taste in composition, as well as of the extended compass of human intellect; and while men of talent and erudition were occupied with the higher object of enlarging and improving the popular conceptions and faculties, by multiplying transcripts and by expounding them, they would inevitably grow emulous of the many excellencies in Greek and Roman literature, and affect correspondent appellations and formularies, as well as idioms and constructions, that would give to their own

pages the impress of learning; and while it adorned them would add to their currency, and pass on the readers of those times as greatly contributing to the authority of their writings*. As might therefore be expected, the works alike of critics, oratours, poets, and philosophers, were, with rare exceptions, overrun for a length of years after the revival of an-

* The most judicious of French critics has remarked of his countryman, *Ronsard*, a poet of the same date with the Earl of *Surrey*, *Spenser*, and Sir *P. Sydney*. “ *Ronsard* avoit le genie élevé, et de grands talens pour la Poesie : mais il semble que l’art n’ait servi qu’a corrompre en lui la nature, au lieu de la perfectionner. En effet ses vers sont pleins de licenses outrées, et l’affection qu’il eut de les charger d’une erudition fatigante et mal-managée, les a rendu peu intelligibles.” *Boileau ; Œuvres*, i, 54; *Dresden*, 1767.

See what the younger *Racine* has observed of *Ronsard* to the same purpose, and of the attempt in the sixteenth century of the French Poets to reconcile their versification to the dactylic measures of the Greeks and Romans; *Mem. de l’Academie des Inscriptions ; tom. xv*, p. 194, et 211. *Alberti* is said to have vainly laboured to effect the same in Italian.

tient learning, with unidiomatic and licentious innovations taken from the Greek and Latin.

These dead languages might have been made to enrich very successfully even “the comprehensive English energy” celebrated by Lord *Roscommon*, if the endeavour to increase our vocabulary had been repressed and regulated in its exercise by a cautious and temperate use. The misfortune was, that when the long-lost volumes of antiquity were again unrolled, this practice, with the usual fate of novelties, was carried to an excess. This race of scholars seems to have supposed it not to be possible to overcharge their works with classical philology, “apishly Romanizing, as if a learned grammatical pen would cast no ink without “Latin.” I avail myself of MILTON’s words, while I embrace a wider circuit of application.

Not to insist, that Latin was for a long duration of time the common idiom of the European Literati; it is said to have been

through his command of it, that Sir *Thomas More's* fame was spread so widely over the continent. *Bacon* was well aware, that his reputation as a philosopher must be limited to this island, unless his work was cloathed in a Roman dress, which he accordingly felt a parent's solicitude to provide for his production on the Advancement of Learning. And *MILTON*, when vindicating to the world at large the execution of *Charles*, complains of the disadvantage that he lay under in expressing himself, from the necessity of employing a language not his own *.

With the disposition then so generally prevalent, to fill our Teutonic diction with verbal innovations, and to infuse Latin modes of speech, it is somewhat remarkable, that Sir *John Cheke*, who was counted the learnedst of *Englishmen*, says *MILTON*, should have inculcated other notions of such intrusions. Probably, he foresaw,

* “ In extranea præsertim, quâ utor necessariò, linguâ,
“ et persæpe mihi nequaquam satisfacio.”

that, with the character, much of the substance would be lost; and to stop the multiplication of these adulterations, as well as to restore the vernacular tongue to its just estimation, he set himself to a version of the Gospels, in which he laboured to use exclusively words derived from the Saxon*. A Letter from him, preserved at the end of *Hoby's Translation of Castiglione's Courtier*, which had been submitted in manuscript to *Cheke's* correction, I will give at length, as a literary curiosity. Beside his instructions relative to the properest style to follow in English composition, it exhibits an example of the reformed Orthography, which he recommended for adoption.

“TO HIS LOUING FRIND MAYSTER

“THOMAS HOBY.

“For your opinion of my gud
 “will vnto you as you wriit, you can not
 “be deceiued: for submitting your do-

* See his *Life* by *Strype*, p. 213.

“ inges to mi iudgement, I thanke you:
 “ for taking this pain of your translation,
 “ you worthilie deseru great thanks of all
 “ sortes. I haue taken sum pain at your
 “ request cheffie in your preface, not in
 “ the reading of it for that was pleasaunt
 “ vnto me boath for the roundnes of your
 “ saienges and welspeakinges of the saam,
 “ but in changing certein wordes which
 “ might verie well be let aloan, but that
 “ I am verie curious in my freendes mat-
 “ ters, not to determijn, but to debaat
 “ what is best. Whearin, I seek not the
 “ bestues haplie bi truth, but bi mijn own
 “ phansie, and shew of goodnes.

“ I am of this opinion that our own
 “ tung shold be written cleane and pure,
 “ vnmixt and vnmangeled with borrowing
 “ of other tungen, wherin if we take not
 “ heed bi tijm, euer borrowing and neuer
 “ payeng, she shall be fain to keep her
 “ house as bankrupt. For then doth our
 “ tung naturallie and praisablie vtter her
 “ meaning, whan she bouroweth no con-
 “ terfeitnes of other tungen to attire her

“ self withall, but vseth plainlie her own,
 “ with such shift, as nature, craft, expe-
 “ riens, and folowing of other excellent*
 “ doth lead her vnto, and if she want at
 “ ani tijm (as being vnperfight she must)
 “ yet let her borow with suche bashfulnes,
 “ that it mai appeer, that if either the
 “ mould of our own tung could serue vs to
 “ fascion a woord of our own, or if the
 “ old denisoned wordes could content and
 “ ease this neede, we wold not boldly ven-
 “ ture of vnknownen wordes. This I say
 “ not for reproof of you, who haue scarslie
 “ and necessarily vsed whear occasion
 “ serveth a strange word so, as it seemeth
 “ to grow out of the matter and not to be
 “ sought for: but for mijn own defens,
 “ who might be counted ouerstraight a
 “ deemer of thinges, if I gaue not thys
 “ accompt to you, mi freend and wijs, of
 “ mi marring this your handiwork. But I
 “ am called awai, I prai you pardon mi
 “ shortnes, the rest of mi saienges should

* Sic.

“ be but praise and exhortacion in this
 “ your doinges, which at moar leisor I
 “ shold do better. From my house in
 “ Woodstreete

“ the 16. of July. 1557.

“ Yours assured
 “ Joan Cheek.”

Notwithstanding the admonitions and example of one so critically skilled in all classical attainments as the Tutor to *Edward VI*, another admirer of our Anglo-Saxon Dialect, an Antiquary, who wrote at the commencement of the succeeding century, found himself nearly alone, when he protested against the influx of extraneous terms and idioms still pouring in by the followers of the new phraseology :

“ Since the time of Chaucer, more Latin
 “ and French hath beene mingled with
 “ our tongue then left out of it, but of
 “ late wee haue falne to such borrowing
 “ of words from Latin, French, and other
 “ Tongues, that it had bin beyond all stay
 “ and limit, which albeit some of vs do

“ like well, and think our Tongue thereby
 “ much bettered, yet do strangers there-
 “ fore carry the farre lesse opinion thereof,
 “ some saying that it is of it selfe no lan-
 “ guage at all, but the scum of many lan-
 “ guages, others that it is most barren,
 “ and that wee are daily faine to borrow
 “ words for it (as though it yet lacked
 “ making) out of other languages to patch
 “ it vp withall, and that if wee were put
 “ to repay our borrowed speech backe
 “ agayne, to the languages that may lay
 “ clayme vnto it; wee should be left little
 “ better then dumbe, or scarsly able to
 “ speake any thing that should be sen-
 “ cible.

“ For mine owne part, I hold them de-
 “ ceiued that thinke our speech bettered
 “ by the aboundance of our daily bor-
 “ rowed words, for they beeing of an
 “ other nature and not originally belonging
 “ to our language, do not neither can they
 “ in our tongue, beare their naturall and
 “ true deriuation; and therefore as well

“ may we fetch words from the Ethiopians,
 “ or East or West Indians, and thrust them
 “ into our Language, and baptize all by
 “ the name of English, as those which wee
 “ daily take from the Latin, or languages
 “ thereon depending; and here hence it
 “ commeth (as by often experience is
 “ found) that some English men discours-
 “ ing together, others being present, and
 “ of our owne Nation, and that naturally
 “ speak the English tongue, are not able
 “ to vnderstand what the others say, not-
 “ withstanding they call it English that
 “ they speake*.”

But these heterogeneous admixtures
 have long become indissolubly blended
 with the original element of our Language,
 and have saturated it.

Lucretius was fully sensible of the diffi-
 culties that he should have to encounter
 in disseminating the doctrines of the Epi-
 curean Philosophy, among the Romans,

* See *Verstegan's Restitution of decayed Intelli-
 gence*; p. 201. 4to. 1628.

through the poverty of the Latin in his time*: our dictionary is so copious, that we need fear no loss of ideas from a paucity of words to give them a permanency. Or if any accession be ever requisite, or expedient, it can only occur in the departments of scientific research and physiological discovery. The jargon of the fanciful *Paracelsus* and his adherents, the mere coinage of their own brains, which for a while encumbered the study of the Hermetic art, is in no wise superior to the cabalistic terms of the astrological impostors; and any one, who compares it with the recent nomenclature of improved Chemistry, will feel himself to be justified in maintaining, that the Greek for this purpose may be still laid under contribution with advantage.

* “Nec me animi fallit, Graiorum obscura reperta

“Difficile inlustrare Latinis versibus esse;

“Multa novis verbis præsertim quom sit agundum

“Propter egestatem linguæ, et rerum novitatem.”

I. 36. *Wakefield's edit.*

As a further palliation of MILTON's Latinized improprieties of expression, it remains to be observed, that the English had not yet settled down into the consistency it afterward attained. Instead, therefore, of taxing him captiously, and without any intimation of what would absolve him from the imputation of *perverseness and pedantry*, if the Biographer had entered on his task with an ingenuous bent of mind, he would have been led to a conclusion much less rigorous. For an authour of this period to be addicted to Latinism is not enough to entitle us to condemn him peremptorily as a *pedant*, when he was following, in common with his contemporaries, the example of his predecessors. How did this appear at the time it was written? is therefore the previous inquiry of every candid Critic, before he concludes that to be *perverse* or *pedantic*, which in the revolutions of literary taste becomes exploded. We may turn the edge of this reproof back on himself;

for a more reasonable application of these epithets might be made to him, who, abandoning the practice of his day, deliberately seeks to himself a name by the singularity of his manner. If, then, *Johnson* had taken into consideration the fashion of the times, he would have unavoidably mollified this severity of judgment, and called us back to view an important stage in the progress of the English tongue : a stage, which it requires some exertion of our charity to believe, that he could pass without notice, who had compiled its Grammar and written its History. During the age of MILTON, and those immediately preceding, its flux state emboldened many of our writers each to try his several project in moulding it afresh. For example, Sir *Thomas Smith*, whom *Strype* calls “ a great refiner of the “ English writing,” proposed to break up our Alphabet, and to cast a considerable proportion of its characters in a new shape, on several of which he bestowed

novel and complex powers. It was another part of his scheme to have doubled the Vowels, and to have augmented the Letters to twenty-nine; out of which number he would have taken nineteen from the Latin, four from the Greek, and have kept of the Saxon only the remaining six. Of so ductile a temper did he consider the texture of his native tongue, and so pliable as to be twisted after any new model, like clay in the hand of the potter*.

While many exerted themselves to transfuse into the body of their prose the spirit which they extracted from the remains of classic genius, others expended infinite pains in a more arduous undertaking, when they strove to supplant our modulated and rhyming Couplets by Dactyls and Spondees; an attempt scarcely less discordant to the tone of the English language, than the change in the constituent

* See his Tract, "De recta et emendata Linguæ Anglicæ Scriptione, Dialogus, Thóma Smitho Equestris Ordinis Anglo Authore, Lutetiæ, 1568, 4to."

parts of its words, by the proposed mode of English orthography, which the Statesman just mentioned amused his retired hours with sketching out. *Spenser*, to make the beauties of Latin Poetry completely our own, meditated a poem in English Hexameters. Some English lambics to the memory of Sir *Philip Sidney* are attributed to his "Mourning Muse." This flower of English chivalry himself interspersed verse in Roman feet over his heroic Pastoral : and in the same reign *Puttenham* dedicated a chapter of "The Arte of English Poesie," to show, "How if all maner of sodaine innouations
 " were not very scandalous, specially in
 " the Lawes of any Langage or Arte, the
 " vse of the Greeke or Latine Feete might
 " be brought into our vulgar Poesie, and
 " with good grace inough." *Stanyhurst*, accordingly, rendered a part of the *Æneid* into English, in the very numbers of the Poet of Mantua. But the Mincian Bay could not preserve its verdure on the banks of the Thames.

Neither was *Wallis* more successful with his English Sapphics :

“ Why’ do thé héthén furiously ráge ; and

“ Why’ do the peéple meditáte a váin thing ?

“ Why’ do thé kings thát are on éarth uníte ; and

“ Princes a’sémbles*.”

MILTON’S earliest essay to discard the “ fair barbarity” of a chiming close, his literal version in unrhymed metre of *Horace’s* Ode to Pyrrha, is another and a curious specimen of the attempt to naturalize, in this soil, a new variety of these exotic species of measure. So absolutely were our ancestors fascinated with the charm of classical quantities. This veneration, or almost superstitious regard for the relics of antiquity, would not leave their very defects uncopied. No Ballad-monger would now split a word to suit the exigence of his metre ; ending a line with the first, and beginning the next with

* *Wallis’s* motive for this travesty of the second Psalm was, “ ut appareat, quam facile ferat Latinos numeros “ lingua Anglicana.” See his Grammar, p. 198, *Hollis’s* edition.

the last syllable. *Ben Jonson* used this license, and would have vouched precedents fetched from Greece and Rome, as a sufficient justification of this violent trespass against the established laws of the accentual combinations in our native versification. Nothing but this passionate fondness could have made them overlook the impracticability of substituting quantity for accent with success.

“ In this northern tract our hoarser throats

“ Utter unripe and ill-constrained notes.”

The attempt could not but miscarry in our tongue, whose strongest characteristic is its abundance of monosyllables. This obstacle could not, I apprehend, have been surmounted, if no other impediment had occurred to the adaptation of Roman Prosody to a Gothic frame of speech. It was the frequency of these and of similar experiments, which must have induced *Lilly's* complaint, in the *Epistle Dedicatory* to his fantastic Romance, so much in

vogue at the court of *Elizabeth* : “ It is
 “ a world to see, how Englishmen desire
 “ to hear finer speech than their lan-
 “ guage will allow*.” This is highly ex-
 pressive of the desire among our fore-
 fathers to innovate on their mother tongue.
 At the same time it is a confession, which
 surprises us should come from so affected
 an Authour as himself. Or did his better
 judgment suggest this as an apology for
 sacrificing to a false taste, and surrender-
 ing his own sense of propriety to the pre-
 vailing humour of forcing the stubborn
 genius of his native language to adventi-
 tious and corrupt refinements? *Temporis*
ejus auribus accomodatum. In a word, we
 do not appear to have gained any thing like
 stability till after the Restoration. *Waller*
 has a pleasing copy of verses to deplore his
 own hard fortune, and that of his poetical
 brethren, because their works could not last
 long in a tongue that was daily changing.

* Euphues, or the Anatomie of Wit.

From the above notices, cursory as they are, we may safely infer, that *Johnson's* censure, to have made it just, should have been accompanied with some enumeration of the alleviating circumstances, which would exonerate MILTON from this imputation of *perverseness* or of *pedantry*, in the obnoxious meaning in which it might, I grant, be truly applied to any one, who should now write the same: but till these circumstances had ceased to operate, this practice ought to have incurred a smaller share of reprehension.

To pursue these vindictory strictures yet a little further. MILTON's deflecting English words away from their original or accepted sense to a Latin construction, deserves neither praise nor imitation. Still it may be contended, that this practice is not more at variance with the analogies of the Anglo-Saxon than a style, like our Critic's, inflated by Latin synonymes for words which are the proper growth of our own country, and Latinized transpositions or dislocations of the natural

structure, with other unidiomatical arrangements. In the adjustment of his own sentences he was stiff and elaborate, as well as the leader in reviving among us the fashion of working Roman phraseology into an English ground. For where is the page through his numerous writings, which does not present developments prominently indicating propensities to “repudiate his vernacular idiom*?” Whereas it might be fairly argued, that MILTON, by giving a Latin sense to English words, has denoted rather a reluctance to deviate from English affinities than any desire to lay them aside. Then why, except with the design of depreciation, was it held out as more vicious to incorporate “foreign idioms” with our native forms of speech, than it is to supersede Teutonic etymologies by substitutes drawn from foreign radicals? But thus it is: the vices of a past age astonish us; familiarized to the vices of our own, they excite little surprize.

* *Bentley on Phalaris.*

Meanwhile, for fear that I should, when unfolding the motive of our Author, and the excuse for his encroaching, like others of that day, on our Anglicisms, be ranged among those who mistake such depravations for improvements, I digress to declare, that the glittering fragments, which we for centuries have applied ourselves with unremitting industry to import from Rome to stud our Saxon fabric, give it, to my view, a tessellated, or rather a party-coloured and grotesque, appearance. We have wrought up a superstructure, which calls to remembrance what travellers relate of some of the humbler habitations in modern Greece: they are, we are told, raised with the first rude materials that offered themselves, and here and there some exquisite remains of Grecian architecture, negligently intermixed by the builder, in mockery, as it were, of the original style of the edifice.

Let it also be remembered, that, in the course of what many have persuaded

themselves to believe the amelioration of our language, we have dropped not a few of those useful and ornamental distinctions of speech, which our Saxon ancestors brought over with them. In a happy facility for compounded words their tongue vied with the Greek. A sufficient number of them are polysyllabic and well-vowelled*; too many of ours are clusters of Consonants, curtailed of their fair proportion, or abbreviated to one syllable. Nearly all of their masculine and feminine Substantives, so conducive to perspicuity, have, with the lapse of centuries, fallen into disuse†. We have continued only

* To exemplify this, I will extract a passage from a metrical Calendar, printed by *Hickes*; where we also catch a glimmering of Poetry.

Spýlce ýmb fýrrt pucan.

Butan anpe niht.

Dæt te ýlsum bpingð.

Sigel beophhte ðagar.

Sumor to tune.

Ʒearme gepýðeru.

Ðænne pangar hpaðe.

Bloztmum blopað.

Spýlce bliƷ aƷtihð.

Leonð miððan Ʒearð.

ManiƷpa haba

LƷicepa cýnna.

Linguarum Vett. Septentrionalium Thesaurus; I. 205.

† As FƷeonð (*Freond*) *Amicus*, a *Friend*; FƷeunðýne

one of the variations of Case in the declension of the Nouns substantive. No distinction of Gender, Case, or Number in the termination of their Adjectives has descended to us. The Editor of *Fortescue's* Treatise on the Difference between an absolute and limited Monarchy, justly regrets, that we have laid aside too many of the Saxon Comparatives and Superlatives, by using *more* and *most* in modern English*: and for their Verbs, time has swept away the discriminations of the plural Number; while we have poorly supplied the place of their Moods†; and the

(*Freundyne*), *Amica*; (*Lye's* Saxon Dict. by *Manning in v.*); which latter word our forefathers were contented to express by a *She-Friend*; and we have softened into a *female Friend*. So, at an earlier period *Kuninguna* signified *Queen*, and was deduced from *Kuning*, *King*.

* p. 19, 8vo. 1724. A book not unknown to the late Mr. *Horne Tooke*, as is evident by some of the Saxon Etymologies in his *Diversions of Purley*, borrowed from the first Lord *Fortescue's* glossarial annotations on this work of his venerable Ancestor.

† “ Longè meliùs vet. Anglo-Saxones præteritum pass. “ participium per ge, vet. Angli per y vel i, augmento

inflections of our Verbs are become woe-fully irregular. For the loss of all these distinguishing properties, the introduction of a countless multitude of Latin words makes but a sorry recompense. They would be a sorry recompense, even if the larger number had not been previously barbarized by the French; some of them no less preposterously than the names of our Circumnavigators were disguised by the islanders of O'Taheite, when they distorted *Banks* into *Opane*, and *Cook* into *Toote*. But of this enough.

The impression of Dr. *Johnson's* wisdom and integrity has, not without good reason, sunk deep into the public mind; while his *Critical Biography* bids fair to rival in permanency the popularity of *Addison's* daily *Essays*; I will, therefore, bring still closer to him the proof of his

“ more Græcorum addito, formârunt, quod nos rejecimus;
 “ sic meliùs infinitiva sua Anglo-Saxones, per term. *an*,
 “ quàm nos hodie æquivoco illo articulo τὸ præmisso sæpe
 “ etiam omisso, distinxerunt,” &c. *Skinner; Canones Etymologici*.

determined leaning against MILTON. His carping and calumniating criticisms provoke the retort; and it is much to the purpose, because it supplies an undeniable confirmation of the unworthy and incurable prepossession which rankled in his breast. For surely he himself too commonly oppressed his sentences with gigantic, ponderous words, and not seldom overlaid his sense by “aggravating his style” with sesquipedalian Latinism; where the Reader’s attention is too much called to the consideration of the language in which the sentiments are conveyed. In his own scheme of sentence and method of period he is far more artificial than the Writer whom he reprehends as *perversely pedantic*; insomuch, that he has undeniably become monotonous and a mannerist. Without a doubt, neither of them can boast the golden mean of *Addison* and *Goldsmith*; but in the general turn and inclination of *his* diction, we are more to seek for genuine Anglicisms, and the radical constitutions and customary forms

of our “idiotic” phraseology. He lamentably impeached his own consistency in decrying MILTON’S Latinized words, after the verbal sophistications, the studied deformities, of Sir *Thomas Brown* had met in him with an Apologist, if we may not call him an Imitator. That ingenious Scholar seems to have been misled into the egregious error, that in every step he receded from his mother-tongue the nearer he approached to elegance and excellence*. Now the Critic pronounces his style to be “a tissue of many languages, “a mixture of heterogeneous words “brought together from distant regions,

* In the address to the Reader, prefixed to his “*Pseudoxia Epidemica* ; or, Enquiries into very many received “Tenents, and commonly presumed Truths,” *Brown* observes—“I confess the quality of the subject will sometimes carry us into expressions beyond meer English apprehensions. And indeed, *if elegance still proceeds*, and English pens maintain that stream, we “have of late observed to flow from many, we shall “within few years be fain to learn Latine to understand “English, and a work will prove of equal facility in “either.”

“ with terms originally appropriated to one
 “ art, and drawn by violence into the ser-
 “ vice of another. He must, however,
 “ be confessed to have augmented our
 “ philosophical diction; and, in defence
 “ of his uncommon words and expressions,
 “ we must consider, that he had uncom-
 “ mon sentiments, and was not content to
 “ express in many words that idea for
 “ which any language could supply a
 “ single term. But his innovations are
 “ sometimes pleasing, and his temerities
 “ happy: he has many *verba ardentia*,
 “ forcible expressions, which he would
 “ never have found but by venturing to
 “ the utmost verge of propriety; and
 “ flights, which would never have been
 “ reached but by one who had very little
 “ fear of the shame of falling.” The
 greater part of the merit in this antithesis
 of blame and commendation, it was a
 debt due to Truth and to MILTON, at
 the very least, to have allowed him like-
 wise; since his defects, both for number
 and account, are of much smaller note than

Brown's; of whose pedantries what more ought to be said than that "he had been at a feast of languages, and stolen the scraps?" Our Authour's tenour of expression is superiour beyond all competition. His Prose Works are a rich fund of elevated phraseology: while, with a modification of his sentences infinitely diversified, he uses words with a philological strictness of signification, which the Lexicographer himself has not surpassed.

He never entered into controversy as if he was playing for a prize of oratorical disputation. In consequence, the Reader has not anywhere to complain, that he is cold, or jejune, or languid. The same *acer spiritus ac vis* pervades and inspires the voluminous body of his works. There is a solidity of Reasoning, a force of Eloquence, and an originality of Sentiment, that peculiarly marks them for his own; not unfrequently accompanied with a plenitude and glow of thought, impressed by an intellectual energy highly characteristic of

an honest confidence in powerful talents and transcendent acquirements, exerted, as was his assured belief, in promoting the dearest interests of his country; exerted, too, we should ever have in remembrance, without reward, and at the expense of eye-sight*.

* Here I cannot forbear the gratification of transcribing the solemn and affecting adjuration forced from him by the inhuman reproaches of his enemies, on the sorest calamity that can afflict the human frame. "Ad
 " me quod attinet, te testor, DEUS, mentis intimæ, cogita-
 " tionúmque omnium indagator, me nullius rei (quan-
 " quam hoc apud me sæpius, et quam maximè potui, seriò
 " quæsi et recessus vitæ omnes excussi) nullius vel
 " recens vel olim commissi, mihimet conscium esse, cujus
 " atrocitas hanc mihi præ cæteris calamitatem creare, aut
 " accersisse meritò potuerit. Quod etiam ullo tempore
 " scripsi (quoniam hoc nunc me luere quasi piaculum
 " regii existimant atque adeò triumphant) testor itidem
 " DEUM, me nihil istiusmodi scripsisse, quod non rectum
 " et verum, DEOQUE gratum esse, et persuaserim tum
 " mihi, et etiamnum persuasus sim; idque nullâ ambi-
 " tione, lucro, aut gloriâ ductus; sed officii, sed honesti,
 " sed pietatis in patriam ratione solâ; nec Reipublicæ
 " tantùm, sed Ecclesiæ quoque liberandæ causâ potissi-
 " mùm fecisse:" &c. &c.

Defensio Secunda pro Populo Anglicano.

And he afterward avers, "Hanc intra privatos pari-

His Prose Works, it is true, are too frequently debased by unseemly, though recriminatory, asperities on his opponents, in the manner of the age; and not less acrimonious and vituperative than the vehement effusions which Mr. *Burke's* terrified fancy, in his declining years, fulminated, without the extenuation of personal provocation, on those who dissented from the political creed he then embraced; but these recriminations and asperities, now the passions that generated them have abated, every one would be pleased to see obliterated. And his pages, I deny not,

“etes meam operam nunc Ecclesiæ, nunc Reipublicæ
 “gratis dedi; mihi vicissim vel hæc vel illa præter incolumitatem nihil; bonam certè conscientiam, bonam
 “apud bonos existimationem, et honestam hanc dicendi
 “libertatem facta ipsa reddidere: Commoda alii, alii
 “honores gratis ad se trahebant: Me nemo ambientem,
 “nemo per amicos quicquam petentem, curiæ foribus
 “affixum petitorio vultu, aut minorum conventuum vestibulis hærentem nemo me unquam vidit. Domi fere
 “me continebam, meis ipse facultatibus, tametsi hoc
 “civili tumultu magna ex parte sæpe detentis, et censum ferè iniquiùs mihi impositum, et vitam utcunque
 “frugi tolerabam.”

are, again like *Burke's*, occasionally disfigured by coarse Metaphors ; such as would be hazarded but by few writers in the last or present century. At the same time, the urbanity of the *Areopagitica* proves how evenly he could guide his pen in argument, when he was not goaded by contumelious reproaches and slanderous invective, on himself and on the cause he had espoused. He, indeed, must have imbibed a very large share of *Johnson's* political bigotry, who would refuse to acknowledge, that in his Prose, MILTON has often embodied the creations of his mind in language not at all inferiour to his reach of thought ; or who will not confess, that these writings abound with vivid and striking imagery, and sometimes with figures bold almost to extravagance. When Sir *Thomas Brown* is said to have soared to an adventurous height, we may without hesitation reply—MILTON's imagination towers an eagle's pitch above him. But it could only have been through a strange and unexampled fatality, had the Prose of the great Master

of unfettered Song been found deficient in the gorgeous trappings and embellishments, which Genius, cultivated and inventive Genius like his, must always have at command. Mr. *Warton*, with his open aversion to the political writings, in an unguarded moment, admitted, that “ what “ was Enthusiasm in most of the puritanical writers was Poetry in MILTON.” It has been observed of a Hero of Antiquity, that his imperfections flowed from the contagion of the times ; his virtues were his own, the spontaneous growth of Nature, or the product of Reflection : and the same observation would hold eminently true of MILTON, whether we were to apply it to the matter or to the manner of his Prose Writings in English.

Hitherto these remarks have been chiefly restricted to one imputed defect in MILTON’s English Prose ; and now to wind up the whole on a broader ground. Its prevailing, perhaps its greatest fault, is prolixity of sentence ; sometimes accompanied with a complication of structure,

which perplexes the meaning too much for the Reader to disentangle it with ease to himself as he passes on. But this evolution or elongation of period was by many then deemed a beauty. He derided an adversary for making “sentences by the statute, as if all above three inches were confiscate,” and “who, instead of well-sized periods, greets him with a quantity of thumb-ring posies:” as *Cowley* called *Seneca short-lung’d*, in ridicule of his abrupt and concise system of diction. If the dilated sentence, which stands the second in our Authour’s *Treatise of Reformation in England*, had attracted censure, he would have satisfied himself by appealing to some of *Tully’s* “periods of a mile.” And who shall condemn the *periodical* style, as it has been denominated by a philosophical Critic*? Not they, certainly, who approve the volume, or rather protraction of sentence in *Clarendon*, where the sense is carried on through a length-

* Harris.

ened contexture of clauses, a labyrinth of words ; so that his History not very seldom exhibits the unskilful mechanism of parenthesis included within parenthesis. All his wire-drawn amplifications, all such concatenations of words, must look unsightly to those, who have been habituated to the shortened and pointed style, and breaks of thought, which have now been for some years so anxiously studied among us : a practice I presume to have originated here in imitation of *Montesquieu's* sententious manner ; itself an imitation of the oracular brevity of *Tacitus*. But if we have not, through the dread of the diffuse, started off into the opposite extreme so far, that the continuity of thought is frequently dissolved, it is well. *Fullit te incautum pietas tua.*— Might not *Conyers Middleton*, and Sir *William Jones*, who, it should seem, took *Middleton* for his model, be instanced as having fallen on a just medium as to flowing, large, and rounded periods ?

Spratt is but florid and Ciceronian ; and

Cowley's Prose, however sweet, wants force ; and *Temple* and *Tillotson* are of another school. On the whole, then, I have in my recollection no Prose Writer of his own time, who will appear to more advantage when placed against *MILTON*, with all his scholastic imperfections, if we except *Hobbes*, who stands, I think, without a rival among his contemporaries, for a strong, clear, equable, and easy style : a style admirably calculated for philosophical disquisition, and which it is to be regretted that *Locke*, who is not without obligations to him in his metaphysical reasoning, did not attain. Unless indeed *Dryden* could be brought into the same æra ; since *Dryden's* Prose, though not sufficiently free from foreign affectations, is without any question our standard of vigorous, natural, and authentic English. “ Criticism, either didactic or defensive, “ occupies almost all his Prose, except “ those pages which he has devoted to his “ Patrons ; but none of his Prefaces were “ ever thought tedious. They have not

“ the formality of a settled style, in which
 “ the first half of the sentence betrays the
 “ other. The clauses are never balanced,
 “ nor the periods modelled : every word
 “ seems to drop by chance, though it falls
 “ into its proper place*.” Praise more
 just, or more happily conceived, will not
 easily be found.

In conclusion : if the decision on the
 style of MILTON'S English Prose, in his
 works of a *higher mood*, were to be sub-
 mitted to those alone who do not admire
 the alluring but vitious Gallicism of *Hume*
 and *Gibbon*, and who are not smitten by
 the “ gay rankness” of our “ modern fus-
 “ tianists,” I should not feel myself at all
 solicitous lest the result should be adverse
 to the opinion I have now ventured to
 offer : so far, let me be understood, as it is
 duly appreciated in its relation to the time
 in which they appeared. They who think
 otherwise, before they object the names of
Hooker, or *Barrow*, or *Taylor*, would

* Johnson.

do well to try if they can select from the writings of these acknowledged masters of our language a finer succession of well-turned periods, at once perspicuous, masculine, and rhythmical, than such as I now adduce from the introductory section to his second Book on the *Reason of Church Government*.

“ Surely to every good and peaceable
 “ Man, it must in nature needs be a hateful thing to be the displeaser and molester of thousands; much better would it like him doubtless to be the Messenger of Gladness and Contentment, which is his chief intended business to all Mankind, but that they resist and oppose their own true happiness. But when God commands to take the trumpet, and blow a dolorous or a jarring blast, it lies not in Man’s Will what he shall say, or what he shall conceal. If he shall think to be silent, as *Jeremiah* did, because of the reproach and derision he met with daily, and all

“ *his familiar friends watched for his*
 “ *halting, to be revenged on him for*
 “ *speaking the Truth, he would be forced*
 “ *to confess as he confest ; his word was*
 “ *in my heart as a burning fire shut up in*
 “ *my bones ; I was weary with forbearing,*
 “ *and could not stay.* Which might teach
 “ these times not suddenly to condemn all
 “ things that are sharply spoken, or vehe-
 “ mentally written, as proceeding out of
 “ Stomach, Virulence, and Ill-nature ;
 “ but to consider rather that if the Pre-
 “ lates have leave to say the worst that
 “ can be said, or do the worst that can be
 “ done, while they strive to keep to them-
 “ selves, to their great pleasure and com-
 “ modity, those things which they ought
 “ to render up, no Man can be justly
 “ offended with him that shall endeavour
 “ to impart and bestow, without any gain
 “ to himself, those sharp but saving words,
 “ which would be a terror and a torment
 “ in him to keep back. For me, I have
 “ determined to lay up as the best trea-

“ sure, and solace of a good old Age, if
 “ GOD vouchsafe it me, the honest Liberty
 “ of free Speech from my Youth, where I
 “ shall think it available in so dear a
 “ concernment as the Church’s good. For
 “ if I be either by disposition, or what
 “ other cause, too inquisitive, or suspi-
 “ cious of myself and mine own doings,
 “ who can help it? But this I foresee,
 “ that should the Church be brought
 “ under heavy oppression, and GOD have
 “ given me ability the while to reason
 “ against that Man that should be the
 “ Authour of so foul a deed ; or should
 “ she, by blessing from above on the in-
 “ dustry and courage of faithful Men,
 “ change this her distracted estate into
 “ better days, without the least further-
 “ ance or contribution of those few ta-
 “ lents which GOD at that present had
 “ lent me, I foresee what stories I should
 “ hear within myself, all my life after, of
 “ discourage and reproach. Timorous
 “ and ingrateful, the Church of GOD is
 “ now again at the foot of her insulting

“ Enemies, and thou bewailest ; what
 “ matters it for thee, or thy bewailing?
 “ When time was, thou couldest not find
 “ a syllable of all that thou hast read, or
 “ studied, to utter in her behalf. Yet
 “ ease and leisure was given thee for thy
 “ retired Thoughts, out of the sweat of
 “ other Men. Thou hadst the diligence,
 “ the parts, the language of a Man, if a
 “ vain subject were to be adorned or
 “ beautified ; but when the cause of God
 “ and his Church was to be pleaded, for
 “ which purpose that tongue was given
 “ thee which thou hast, God listened if
 “ he could hear thy voice among his zea-
 “ lous servants, but thou wert dumb as a
 “ beast ; from henceforward be that which
 “ thine own brutish silence hath made
 “ thee. Or else I should have heard on
 “ the other ear ; Slothful and ever to be
 “ set light by, the Church hath now over-
 “ come her late distresses after the un-
 “ wearied labours of many her true ser-
 “ vants that stood up in her defence ; thou
 “ also wouldst take upon thee to share

“ among them of their joy : But where-
 “ fore thou ? Where canst thou show
 “ any word or deed of thine which might
 “ have hastened her peace ? Whatever
 “ thou dost now talk, or write, or look,
 “ is the alms of other Men’s active pru-
 “ dence and zeal. Dare not now to say,
 “ or do any thing better than thy former
 “ sloth and infancy * ; or if thou darest,
 “ thou dost impudently to make a thrifty
 “ purchase of boldness to thyself, out of
 “ the painful merits of other Men ; what
 “ before was thy Sin, is now thy Duty, to
 “ be abject and worthless. These, and
 “ such like lessons as these, I know would
 “ have been my Matins duely, and my Even-
 “ song. But now by this little diligence,
 “ mark what a privilege I have gained
 “ with good Men and Saints, to claim my
 “ right of lamenting the tribulations of

* *infancy*.] This is one of MILTON’s Latin senses :
 “ Possitne eloquentia converti in *infantiam*.” *Cicero*.
Infant still bears this etymological meaning in West-
 minster Hall.

“ the Church, if she should suffer, when
 “ others that have ventured nothing for
 “ her sake, have not the honour to be
 “ admitted mourners. But if she lift up
 “ her drooping head and prosper, among
 “ those that have something more than
 “ wished her welfare, I have my charter
 “ and freehold of rejoicing to me and my
 “ heirs. Concerning therefore this way-
 “ ward subject against Prelaty, the touch-
 “ ing whereof is so distastful and dis-
 “ quietous to a number of Men, as by
 “ what hath been said I may deserve of
 “ charitable Readers to be credited, that
 “ neither envy nor gall hath entered me
 “ upon this Controversy, but the enforce-
 “ ment of Conscience only, and a pre-
 “ ventive fear lest the omitting of this
 “ Duty should be against me when I
 “ would store up to myself the good pro-
 “ vision of peaceful hours.”

In this passage his Probity shines out.
 But I could wish this justificatory eluci-
 dation of his motives for mixing in the

polemical discussions of his day to be estimated for the merit of the Style: that we should here consider MILTON as an Authour only; suspending, if it be possible, our reverence for a Man, to whose dignity of nature these exalted sentiments were congenial, and who made them the principles which actuated his conduct in trying conjunctures, through a life singularly chequered.

Dec. 5, 1817.

T H E E N D.

AREOPAGITICA;

A

Speech

OF

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FOR THE

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TO

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